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Deleuze and the simulacrum

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<BOOK-PART><LRH>Sandra Plummer</LRH>

<RRH>Deleuze and the simulacrum</RRH>

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<ABSTRACT><TITLE>Abstract</TITLE>

This chapter investigates Gilles Deleuze's concept of the simulacrum in relation to contemporary photography. Deleuze's account is analysed in conjunction with a close reading of Plato's *Sophist* (the simulacrum's philosophical origin). Theorisations of photography by writers such as Rosalind Krauss are also considered. The second section of the chapter explores the simulacrum in relation to Sarah Pickering's *Public Order* series (2002–2005). *Public Order* is seen to possess a complex relation to similitude and to raise questions about the nature of photography as a documentary medium. The chapter concludes by reflecting on distinctions between repetition and representation.</ABSTRACT>

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<BODY>Conventionally understood as a copy (or a facsimile of a copy), *simulacrum* is a Latin term denoting an image, likeness or semblance. This definition of the concept has obvious application to a medium that was characterised by its capacity to generate “nearly fac-simile copies” including “a multitude of minute details which add the truth and reality of the representation” ([Talbot 1844](#)). Yet the philosophical complexity of the simulacrum is belied by readings that disregard the particular nature of its representation. The philosopher Daniel W. Smith asserts that simulacrum derives from “the Latin *simulare* (to copy, represent, feign)” ([Smith 1997](#): x). The simulacrum pertains to a specific type of copy—the false copy that produces a semblance of reality. This chapter will consider the concept of the simulacrum with particular reference to the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. In Deleuze, the simulacrum embraces the complexity of distinct forms of Platonic mimesis. Deleuze proposes that the philosophical origin of the concept occurs in Plato's *Sophist* where the simulacrum is posited as a “phantasma” in distinction to a true likeness.

Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) was one of the most important French philosophers of the twentieth century. Deleuze was part of a generation of thinkers (alongside his contemporaries

Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault) who came to prominence in the late 1960s and whose work has been labelled as post-structuralist.¹ Whereas Deleuze's early writing often focuses on the history of philosophy, his later work (including his collaborations with Felix Guattari) demonstrates increasing engagement with politics, psychoanalysis, science and literature. Deleuze's influence on the arts has been considerable. His writing has engendered new thought on the philosophy of film (*Cinema 1*, [2005 \[1983\]](#) and *Cinema 2*, [2005 \[1985\]](#)) and on painting (*Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, [2003 \[1981\]](#)). Deleuze's contribution to photography, however, is less clear. This chapter will consider Deleuze's concept of the simulacrum and its pertinence to contemporary photography. In the first section, I will focus on Deleuze's account of the simulacrum derived from his close reading of the concept's Platonic origin. Plato's dialogue will be analysed in light of Deleuze's reading. I take the simulacrum to be that which purports to be a true copy of the model it appears to resemble, but which is actually a false likeness. The distinction between truth and simulation is central. I will propose that the concept of the simulacrum has particular resonance with photography's capacity to produce a copy of the real. Moreover, it is when photography engages with the simulacral (transcending its status as a truthful, technologically generated medium) that we observe its true potential. The second section of this chapter will comprise an analysis of Sarah Pickering's *Public Order* series (2002–2005), which explicitly challenges the conception of photography as a purveyor of truth. I will begin, however, by briefly considering theorisations of the simulacrum and its relation to photography.

<HEAD1><TITLE>Photography and the simulacrum</TITLE></HEAD1>

The photograph's relation to the simulacrum is twofold. On the one hand, the concept of the simulacrum may be seen as antithetical to photography's historical alignment with truth, the evidentiary and the objective documentation of *what has been*.² On the other hand, simulation has always been at the heart of the medium. Although the simulacral nature of photography has received comparatively less attention from scholars, it is evident from as early as 1840 in what has been described as the first staged photograph—Hippolyte Bayard's *Self Portrait as a Drowned Man*. The disregard of photography's simulacral capacity (in favour of its truthfulness) has wider relevance to art history. Michael Camille has argued that the simulacrum has been repressed in art history because “it subverts the cherished dichotomy of model and copy, original and reproduction, image and likeness” ([1996](#): 31). The simulacrum is *not* a reliable copy; rather, it destabilises copying by throwing into disarray the distinction between the model and copy. The simulacrum overthrows the foundational notion of the model as primary in

art and challenges the idea of representation.

Philosophically, the simulacrum possesses the capacity to undermine the structure of model and copy that has persisted since Plato. Smith attributes the origin of the philosophical re-emergence of the concept to Pierre Klossowski ([Smith 1997](#)). The simulacrum recurs in French philosophy from the 1960s through writers such as Klossowski, Deleuze and Foucault. The concept was also explored by Derrida in *Dissemination* (1981) with direct reference to Plato, before gaining further recognition in Baudrillard's theorisations of simulation and the hyperreal. Camille examines philosophical, literary (including Guy Debord and Philip K. Dick) and artistic developments, drawing particular attention to photography's "challenge to 'auratic' art" ([1996](#): 34).³ The conceptual resonances between aura and simulacrum are supplemented by Klossowski's contribution to the translation of Benjamin's "Work of Art" essay.⁴ Benjamin's account of the decline of aura is constructed within a reflection on the experience of modernity and the historical development of photography concerned with the "presence of the original," the copy and authenticity ([1999 \[1936\]](#): 214).

In "Reinventing the Medium," Rosalind Krauss reads Benjamin's essay in relation to the convergence of art and photography whereby the latter's "perfect instance of a multiple-without-an-original" and "structural status as copy" engendered ontological collapse ([1999](#): 290). Krauss insists that photography not only enables the reproduction of works of art, it undermines the concept of the "original" through which artworks are constituted. In "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral" ([1984](#)), Krauss considers the photograph's status as copy in relation to the simulacrum, and with reference to her own translation of Deleuze's "Plato and the Simulacrum" ([1983](#)). Krauss insists that photography performs a *deconstructive* mechanism that challenges the differences between "the original and the copy, the first idea and its slavish imitators" ([1984](#): 59). Photography deconstructs art by enabling the production of a false copy that undermines "the whole system of model and copy, original and fake, first- and second-degree replication" ([1984](#): 63). Photography's mediation *as* duplication problematises the ontological existence of the artwork as an "original." Moreover, Krauss reads photography as "the image that is resemblant only by mechanical circumstance and not by internal, essential connection to the model" ([1984](#): 63). This insistence on photography's simulacral replication of the model's *external* appearance will be seen to have particular pertinence to Deleuze's reading of Plato.

<HEAD1><TITLE>"Plato and the simulacrum"</TITLE></HEAD1>

<DISP-QUOTE>Stranger: When we say that he deceives with that semblance we spoke of and that his art is a practice of deception, shall we be saying that, as the

effect of his art, our mind thinks what is false?

(Plato, 1935)⁵

[S]imulacra are precisely demonic images, stripped of resemblance. Or rather, in contrast to *icônes*, they have externalised resemblance and live on difference instead. If they produce an external effect of resemblance, this takes the form of an illusion.

(Deleuze 2004a: 155)

Deleuze's most sustained account of the simulacrum was published as an appendix to *Logique du sens* in 1969.⁶ Translated as "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy," the appendix comprises two sections: "Plato and the Simulacrum" and "Lucretius and the Simulacrum." Although drawing on a number of Platonic dialogues, including the *Statesman* and the *Phaedrus*, it is Plato's *Sophist* that is most pertinent as it is the origin of the Platonic idea of the simulacrum. In *Difference and Repetition*, where Deleuze also discusses the simulacrum, he asserts that "The whole of Platonism ... is dominated by the idea of drawing a difference between 'the thing itself' and the simulacra" (2004a: 80). Smith reiterates the point that Plato's goal was to select or "*faire le difference* (literally, to 'make the difference') between true and false images" (2006: 91). For Deleuze, however, the task is to transform the type of differentiation that occurs within the Platonic account of the simulacrum; his reformulation of the concept as possessing a positive—internal—difference from the original can be read as an overturning of Plato's philosophy.

Deleuze begins his "Plato and the Simulacrum" essay by posing the question, "what does it mean 'to reverse Platonism'?" This question is initially attributed to Nietzsche, who saw the reversal of Platonism as the task of philosophy. Deleuze, however, also traces the desire to abolish the Platonic "world of essences" and "the world of appearances" to Kant and Hegel (2004b: 291). Deleuze's concern here is not restricted to the denunciation of essences and appearances. He moves from essence (intelligible, Idea) and appearance (sensible, image) to an investigation of the particular question of the distinction between copies and simulacra (2004b: 294). In this Deleuzian exegesis, copies are secondary possessors that are well founded because they resemble that which they copy (2004b: 294). Conversely, simulacra are false pretenders that dissimulate. Deleuze's analysis comprises a discussion of contrasting forms of resemblance (in the distinction between internal and external resemblance). Simplistically, the distinction is between good copies and bad copies, or between copies-icons and simulacra-phantasms. Whereas the former resembles the Idea of the original, the latter

produces only a deceitful external resemblance. Deleuze insists that the reversal of Platonism must be achieved through a revelation of its motivation: Platonism can only be reversed by being tracked down, “the way Plato tracks down the Sophist” (2004b: 291).

The *Sophist* is a late Platonic dialogue that follows an attempt to define the sophistic charlatan philosopher. The opening sections of the text make clear the intention of the dialogue—to “begin by studying the sophist” and to “try to bring his nature to light” (*S* 218b). The goal of the dialogue then is to distinguish and define the sophist. The *Sophist* begins with Theodorus introducing the Stranger from Elea to Socrates. Hearing that the stranger is from the school of Parmenides and Zeno, Socrates assumes that he may be an exponent of sophistry. Sophists were viewed as false philosophers who sought verbal victory over others, yet with little regard for the truth. It is in this sense that sophistry is viewed as an “art of controversy” (*S* 232e) and as “a practice of deception” (Cornford 1935: 190). The *Sophist* is of relevance to the concept of the simulacrum because it is in the course of the dialogue that we discover the nature of authentic and inauthentic practices of philosophy and of true and false representation. Sophistry, according to Francis Macdonald Cornford, is “the false counterfeit of philosophy ... and has its being in the world of *eidola* that is neither real nor totally unreal” (1935: 173). In searching for the paradoxical figure that is the “true sophist,” Plato examines the relation between reality and appearance and proposes clear distinctions between the copy and the simulacrum.

The Platonic method of division provides the means through which the sophist will be defined. As Cornford notes, the dialectic is used to separate things that are “alike” and “the Division is a downward process from that genus to the definition of a species” (1935: 183–4). Following the Platonic method, “the species [sophist] is to be defined by systematically dividing the genus that is taken to include it” (1935: 170). If the sophist is to be found, then he must be sought in sophistic practices. Plato’s dialogue begins with the genus arts, which is divided into the *acquisitive* (in the sense of acquiring that which already exists) and the *productive*, and into further subdivisions within these categories. Later divisions explore the acquisitive arts through the two subdivisions of “arts by capture” and “by exchange.” The sophist is initially placed in the former category of “arts by capture” under “hunting” (*S* 231d), but is subsequently examined under the latter category of acquisition “by exchange,” where he is deemed a peddler of “wisdom” (charging fees for his “knowledge”). In Division VI, the sophist is discerned to use the art of persuasion—seeking to deceive others with false knowledge. The *Sophist*’s seventh and final division explores the genus of the *productive* arts.

It is within this genus, via an exploration of real and unreal (images) that the sophist will be found.

Returning to the question of photography, we could surmise that it is an *acquisitive* art, not simply because of its immediate linguistic correlations with hunting (*snapshot*, for example, derives from a hunting term), but by virtue of its action—to “capture” or *take* images. Writing on resemblance, Deleuze views photography as a process “which captures relations of light” (2003 [1981]: 80). Photography is also, however, a *productive* and creative art that transforms reality. Though dismissive of photography’s capacity to function as art, Deleuze concedes that the “photograph ‘creates’ the person or the landscape” (2003 [1981]: 64). Deleuze’s assessment of photography is that it functions as the simulacrum rather than the true copy: “the most significant thing about the photograph is that it forces upon us the ‘truth’ of implausible and doctored images” (2003 [1981]: 64). Deleuze also compares photographs with the actions of Lucretius’s simulacrum (2003 [1981]: 64).

The final division of image-making in the *Sophist* is where we encounter the distinction between the *copy* and the *simulacrum*. The first category of image-making is “the making of likenesses (*eikastiké*)” the perfect copy that “conforms to the proportions of the original” (S 235d). The Stranger in the dialogue insists that the “first kind of image,” which is “like the original, may fairly be called a likeness (*eikon*)” (S 236a). The second kind of image, however, produces only an *appearance* of a likeness. The Stranger indicates that the second form of image is something that pretends to resemble the original, that “seems to be a likeness, but is not really so” (S 236b). The first type of image is a true resemblance; the second type belongs to the art of “semblance (*phantasma*)” (S 236b). This distinction between true and false copies forms the basis of Deleuze’s analysis of the simulacrum.

Whereas Plato’s dialogue on image-making distinguishes between “likenesses” and “semblances,” Deleuze’s distinction is between “two sorts of images”—*copies* and *simulacra* (2004b: 294). Deleuze’s “copy” corresponds to what is described by the Stranger in the *Sophist* as “likenesses” or *eikastiké*. *Copies* are “secondary possessors” that are “well-founded pretenders,” as they are “guaranteed by resemblance” (2004b: 294). Deleuze’s simulacrum corresponds to the second form of Plato’s division of image-making—the “semblance” or *phantasma*. Simulacra, according to Deleuze, are “false pretenders, built upon a dissimilarity” (2004b: 294). The term “simulacra” here is understood as the Latin translation of the Greek *phantasma*. Perhaps in acknowledgement of Plato’s Greek (*eikon* and *phantasma*), Deleuze also construes the “copies” and “simulacra” as “copies-icons” and “simulacra-phantasms.” Deleuze insists that the *resemblance* of the copies-icons to their original confers upon them

the status of “good images” (2004b: 294). These well-founded claimants are “endowed with resemblance” in contrast to the dissimilarity of the unfounded pretenders (2004b: 294).

The origin of Plato’s concern to distinguish the validity of rival claimants arises within the context of Plato’s Greek *polis*. Plato’s sophist thrives within an agonistic society as a self-appointed philosopher. In contrast to the state-appointed wise man deemed to be in possession of wisdom, the philosopher in the cities of Greece was categorised as one who seeks wisdom “but does not possess it” (Smith 2006: 92–3). This is the context wherein the problem of resemblance and authenticity arises. Deleuze notes that the problem of rival claimants also occurs in Plato’s the *Statesman* and the *Phaedrus*. The purpose of Plato’s dialectic, according to Deleuze, is not to discern a species but to “select lineages: to distinguish pretenders; to distinguish the pure from the impure, the authentic from the inauthentic” (2004b: 292). Deleuze is critical of the Platonic system of selection, which he views in terms of descending degrees of hierarchical ranks of participants down to “the one who is himself a mirage and simulacrum” (2004b: 293).

Plato’s account of difference operates within a transcendent hierarchy premised on failure to resemble the Idea. The Idea is created in response to the problem of judgement. The Idea, then, becomes a “criterion” for judging between the authentic and counterfeit claimants: “Only the Idea,” writes Smith, is “‘the thing itself’, only the Idea is ‘self-identical’” (2006: 96). As Smith notes, “the claimant will be well-founded only to the degree that it *resembles* or imitates the foundation” (2006: 96). The question of lineage and resemblance to the Idea (or foundation) was central to Plato’s task to establish the difference between the just claimant (the good copy) and the pretender (the simulacrum). The claim of pretension from the unfounded claimant corresponds to the simulacrum’s claim to the Idea. As a philosopher of immanence, Deleuze is opposed to a Platonic judgement that places the transcendent Idea at the top of a hierarchy of resemblance. Deleuze unpacks the structure of copy and simulacrum and frees the latter from its position at the bottom of a Platonic chain of similitude. Rather than being defined in relation to lack, Deleuze’s simulacrum possesses difference as a positive attribute.

Possessing internal distinction from the model, Deleuze’s simulacrum can be seen as an affirmation of difference and as a reversal of Plato’s transcendent structure. Deleuze’s account overthrows the hierarchy of similitude within which difference and the simulacrum are established. The Deleuzian simulacrum moves in the direction of difference rather than sameness—a difference that is not secondary to, or preceded by, a superior identity but is a difference *in itself*. In Deleuze’s definition, the simulacrum, far from resembling the Idea, is

always becoming other. The difference between the simulacrum and the copy is no longer a question of *degree*, but is rather a “difference in nature” (2004b: 295). Deleuze’s simulacrum may possess a resemblance to the original but this is merely external. There is internal difference; the simulacrum does not pass through the Idea. The (good) copy, on the other hand, possesses a form of internal resemblance that bears a relation to the Idea of the thing that it copies—the “internal essence” (Deleuze 2004b: 294). The Deleuzian simulacrum escapes the repressive Platonic depths and rises to the surface, unencumbered by the hierarchical distinction between essence and appearance, model and copy.

How might photography function in relation to Plato’s division of image-making? The photograph can be seen as the copy of a thing that is itself a copy of the original Idea (or form). This relation recalls the discussion of representation in Plato’s *Republic*, where “art” is conceived as distantly removed from the truth. Plato’s division of the productive arts distinguishes a trio of “makers”: God as the producer of the Form/Idea, the craftsman who reproduces it, and the artist who produces an “appearance” of the craftsman’s copy. The artist is placed at the bottom of the trio as someone who produces a representation far removed from reality. The artist copies the carpenter’s rendering without understanding the original “Idea.” Plato suggests that, in the example of the bed, the painter is only capable of rendering an appearance of a copy, and from a particular viewpoint. Two-dimensional media possess particular challenges in their restricted capacity to represent reality. Reflecting on the *Republic*, Patton asserts that the painter can only “represent the bed as seen from a certain angle” (1994: 148). This limitation is equally true for photography. In the *Republic*, all art is categorised as mimetic appearance-making.

In the *Sophist*, however, a distinction emerges between “two forms of imitation”: the true *likeness* “conforms to the proportions of the original in all three dimensions” (S 235d), whereas the *semblance* (the simulacrum, or bad copy) enacts a deviation from the original it purports to resemble. The simulacrum is analogous to a large artwork where the sculptor or painter distorts the “true proportions” in accordance with the perspective of the viewer (S 235d–236). In the case of a classical sculpture, this “correction” of the true proportion is made to ensure that the lower parts of the sculpture—that are closer to the viewer—do not look out of proportion with the (more distant) upper parts when viewed from below. The dialogue concludes that such distorted works are not likenesses but *semblances*, or, in Deleuze’s terminology—simulacra. Although the photograph comprises a two-dimensional imitation, it is also *potentially* a “good copy” in its capacity to “reproduce the true proportions” of the original (S 235e).

<HEAD1><TITLE>The simulacrum in photography: Sarah Pickering's *Public Order*</TITLE></HEAD1>

Questions of similitude and authenticity have been a recurring feature in the work of Sarah Pickering, a British artist who predominantly works with photography. Pickering became increasingly interested in the work of Jeff Wall, Thomas Demand and Cindy Sherman as a graduate student at the Royal College of Art in the early 2000s. She was acutely conscious of how “fine art photographers” were “making something in front of the camera” ([Pickering 2015](#)). Pickering was also influenced by Baudrillard’s account of simulation where reality is replaced by “signs of the real.”⁷ Contemporary photography that engages the Deleuzian simulacrum (where there is an intentional internal difference from the Idea of the original) highlights the conceptual role of the artist in *making* “copies” of reality in a manner that exceeds the mimetic and functional aspects of the medium.⁸

In *Public Order*, *Fire Scene* and *Incident*, Pickering can be seen to challenge the nature of photography’s existence as a documentary and indexical medium.⁹ But her work still functions as a document of staged scenes and is still indexical in this respect. The unreality and artifice entailed in these series may recall constructed photography consisting of events or tableaux staged for the camera (as in the work of Wall and Demand). However, Pickering’s subjects are not created in order to be photographed. Moreover, the work exists at the level of the documentary in combination with “real” spaces. It is the virtual nature of these—paradoxically real—environments that is the source of the fictive in Pickering’s work. The streets and interiors in *Public Order*, *Fire Scene* and *Incident* have been constructed as simulated spaces for training UK police, military forces and emergency services. These sites are more than props or backdrops though: they are the stages on which simulation training occurs in a convincingly real way. Pickering witnessed training exercises where new recruits were subjected to verbal abuse and even had petrol bombs thrown at them.¹⁰ A different kind of reality exists in *Fire Scene*, where the interiors are also a site of investigation enabling forensic analysis training of actual burnt buildings. The knowledge that these spaces are in fact simulated environments problematises the works’ apparent documentary nature. *Public Order*, *Fire Scene* and *Incident* reproduce the surface appearance of “reality” in a manner that resembles the original. However, the work does not reproduce the Idea (or “internal essence”) of its model. In what follows, the focus will largely be on Pickering’s *Public Order* series and its relation to the Deleuzian simulacrum.

Public Order largely comprises exterior shots of a place called Denton. This much is evident from the iconic London Transport sign at the entrance to the station (see Figure 6.1). But all is not as it seems. Denton is not a borough in London but a site used for the purposes of riot training. Pickering's "Denton" consists of several UK police force training sites. This fictional Denton stretches from Gravesend to Hounslow, from Greater Manchester to the Midlands, and was photographed over a period of three years, from 2002 to 2005. Denton sounds like a real place, and there are several villages and towns called Denton in England and in the United States. Denton is also the fictional setting for the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and the village in the British TV series *Touch of Frost*, based on the *Frost* novels by R. D. Wingfield. Similarly, this photographed Denton is a fictional construction akin to a film set.

<FIG><LBL>**Figure 6.1**</LBL> <CAPTION>**Sarah Pickering, *Denton Underground Station* (2003), from *Public Order* series. Courtesy the artist**</CAPTION></FIG>

Denton Underground Station appears to depict an empty suburban street. The photograph is dominated by the station entrance in the foreground and an adjacent street receding into the background. Ubiquitous street furniture such as lampposts and CCTV cameras, as well as the lines painted on the tarmacked road, compound the impression of an everyday scene. The neutral skyline, combined with the dominant grey of the concrete construction, recalls the topographical photography of the Bechers. Details such as the painted doors and window surrounds (in addition to the bright colours of the London Transport roundel) provide convincing props, but a closer look at the street on the left reveals 'houses' that consist only of brick facades. The initial impression of an everyday street scene belies the truth of this simulated construction.

Lola Court comprises the rear view of a modern housing development. The scene consists of concrete-block houses and a similarly coloured grey fence. The compositional space evokes claustrophobia and suggests a sinister presence. The unease inherent in the picture is heightened by scorched areas that trace a violent or traumatic event.¹¹ Traversing through the open gate, it is possible to enter the shadowy interior of the doorway. Yet these apparently real houses have no homely interior and evoke only the uncanny. They are empty shells, entirely devoid of furniture, curtains or any trace of residents. *Lola Court* recalls the simulacral home constructed inside Tate Britain by the artist Michael Landy (*Semi-detached*, 2004), where the familiar-looking exterior masked the domestic void inside. The buildings in *Lola Court* echo Deleuze's simulacrum—externally resembling (a real house) but possessing internal difference from the Idea. By depicting the external semblance rather than the interior

reality, *Lola Court* produces a paradoxically “truthful” repetition of the false original. This “good copy” of a simulacrum problematises the Platonic distinctions between original, copy and simulacrum.

Public Order pictures everything we would expect to see in a suburban area. *Front Garden, School Road* includes a landscaped area of shrubs and trees adjacent to a bus shelter; *Farrance Street* shows the back of an Indian restaurant and takeaway. Whereas the concrete-block buildings are in Gravesend, the houses fronted by London bricks (some of which are brightly painted) and the majority of the shops are located in Hounslow. Occasionally there are signs of the real purpose: charred buildings, discarded shopping trolleys, bricks and tyres evidence the aftermath of a staged riot. *High Street* contains an extant barricade; *River Way* includes two smashed-up cars. *Victoria Road* has extensively scorched buildings, including the burned face of a male figure on an advertising poster accompanied by the text “Allure.” This self-referential element—the photograph within the photograph, or *mis-en-abyme*—recalls Walker Evans’s *Torn Movie Poster* (1931) and highlights further the degree of construction within the image. The solitary model looks directly out at the viewer while conveying the glamorous appeal of Chanel’s *eau de toilette pour homme*. The ‘allure’ has long faded, however, both in this poster and in its neglected environment. The advert is not only ironic, but knowing; it operates as a simulacrum within the simulacral environment (where it was used to authenticate a simulated space). When re-photographed, the advert prompts reflection on the documentary and indexical aspects of photography. The poster is doubly indexical in its photographic tracing of the figure and in its subsequent physical recording of fire damage sustained during simulation training. Framed within *Victoria Road*, the poster becomes a re-presentation that serves to undermine its original representational function.

Figure 6.2 Sarah Pickering, *Job Centre, Transport Lane* (2004), from *Public Order* series. Courtesy the artist

Job Centre, Transport Lane (see Figure 6.2) depicts the area at the back of a train station. The dominant greys in the photograph are punctuated by the amber hue of the stationary train and the bright yellow of the employment service logo and delivery truck. The train appears to be destined for Glasgow Central. Marooned in a make-believe town, this scene recalls the surreal juxtaposition of Breton’s locomotive abandoned for many years in a forest (*L’Amour Fou*). This example of Breton’s “convulsive beauty” is particularly pertinent to photography. Krauss sees Breton’s image of a stationary train—of “something that should be in motion but has been stopped”—as “intrinsically photographic” (1986: 112). Detached from “the continuum

of its natural existence,” the train is turned “into a sign of a reality it no longer possesses” (1986: 112). For Krauss, “the still photograph of this stilled train” is a “representation of an object already constituted as a representation” (1986: 112). Similarly, the found object of the stationary train in *Public Order* is an intrinsic part of an environment that is *already* representational. Denton is an image of an image, and *Public Order* is a copy of an image without an original. The fake town is already a simulacrum that produces a semblance of the outward appearance of a—supposedly real—town without origin. *Public Order* is not simply a copy of a copy at a “third remove” from reality: it duplicates a “model” that has no foundation. In re-presenting the town photographically, *Public Order* diverges from Denton’s real purpose or Idea.

Public Order also provokes reflection on the reality behind the simulacral nature of Denton. Alongside the seemingly innocuous artificial constructions, reside signs of the real. The inclusion of the job centre is of particular significance. Pickering observes that class stereotypes proliferate throughout the training grounds of the police, military and emergency services (2015). *Public Order* training spaces are devised as stereotypical, run-down working-class towns. These simulated environments are purposefully designed as similar to places where public order is deemed necessary. It would seem that such dystopic spaces are where disorder occurs. The unloved housing developments, unprepossessing fast-food outlets (including a burger joint and a Tandoori restaurant) and the dated Flicks nightclub—in addition to the employment agency—all reveal something of the bias inherent in their construction. One of the training sites has its own football pitch; another contains the exterior facade of a dreary pub. The decisions behind the design of these carefully crafted environs suggest an institutional gaze that encompasses socio-economic criminal profiling. The designers’ impetus to create riot-training spaces in areas of suburban neglect and urban decline—as well as high unemployment—conveys a considerable degree of class prejudice. The notion that such a town would require a Foucauldian “disciplinary method” is further highlighted by the CCTV cameras that are also omnipresent in many British cities. However, in this fabricated scenario, the CCTV cameras are actually real—they exist in conjunction with a panopticon viewing tower enabling those in authority to oversee the riot training. The virtual, insidious institutional gaze behind the design of the space is accompanied by the actual gaze of senior police officers in a central control room.

There are disturbingly real elements then behind these constructed sets. The interior scenes of the Greater Manchester Police unit photographs—despite lacking some of the degree of detail of the other sites—are real in other ways. *Guards/Violent Man* depicts the

training area for dealing with a violent person. Beneath the painted “violent man” sign is the storage unit for the props for the “re-enactment” (including shelves of black riot-proof helmets with protective visors). Pickering is intent on showing us behind the veil of these simulacral spaces. She ensures that the artifice is revealed—sometimes by selecting a scene or camera angle that reveals the theatrical components. By reflexively pointing to the fake construction, such photographs engage with the simulacrum only in order to destroy its illusionary power. *Semi-detached* also reveals its constructed reality (see Plate 6). Two concrete-block houses comprise a single building; positioned in the centre of the photograph, they are in perfect alignment with a lamppost that bifurcates them. Whereas the painted green door on the left maintains the illusion offered by the frontal view, the open doorway on the right reveals the real green landscape behind it. This open door (which Pickering encountered in situ) is a void in the image—a gap in the field of representation that reveals the real: the ‘no man’s land’ that lies beyond the secure perimeter fence of this military zone. The open door in *Semi-detached* is a rupture in the constructed surface of the image, a wound in the image as picture. The visibility of the real landscape (of the Thames estuary) behind the facade reveals the construction of the house as an image. *Semi-detached* then functions by means of external *resemblance* to the original, but it clearly diverges by picturing the truth behind the semblance.

Dickens, High Street and *Flicks Nightclub* depict the same side of the main street from different viewing positions. At first glance, both photographs portray an everyday street scene featuring commercial premises in a small town, although the upturned shopping trolleys and discarded tyres in *Dickens, High Street* and the charred door in *Flicks Nightclub* hint at something beyond the ordinary (see Plate 7). *Behind Flicks Nightclub*, however, reveals the full extent of the facade. Whereas the former images still maintain the illusion of the main street, *Behind Flicks Nightclub* is the denouement of the series (see cover image). The rear of the street is devoid of buildings and comprises an open space with gravelled ground. The shallow brick frontage is held up by metal supports and girders; the illumination of the fake shop windows is explained by the electric cables that run from the encased windows. This third photograph places the viewer backstage, behind the painted facade. *Behind Flicks Nightclub* unmasks the mechanism of *trompe l’oeil*: it pulls back the curtain of the illusion and reveals the surface nature of the simulacrum.

Guards/Violent Man and *Behind Flicks Nightclub* demonstrate a different relation to similitude from those photographs that appear to maintain the illusion; they eschew external resemblance (to the simulacral model) and move further in the direction of difference. *Denton*

Underground Station, *Lola Court*, *Job Centre*, *Transport Lane* and *Flicks Nightclub* are initially indiscernible from images of a real town. Others, such as *Victoria Road* (with the traces of rioting), suggest the truth behind the space's real purpose. *Guards/Violent Man*, *Semi-detached* and *Behind Flicks Nightclub*, however, clearly reveal the degree of semblance in the fictional Denton. The unmasking of the original Denton as a mere representation can be seen as a moment of disjuncture with the simulacrum as such. Deleuze describes simulation as operating through masking or a "process of disguising, where, behind each mask, there is yet another" (2004b: 300). The photographs in *Public Order* that most clearly reveal behind the simulacral facade (notably *Guards/Violent Man* and *Behind Flicks Nightclub*) are not a reversal of the simulacrum, however—they are not "good copies" of Denton. Moreover, what is revealed beneath the mask is neither "a face" nor "an originary model behind the copy" (Smith 2006: 104).

In *Public Order*, the revelation of the facile nature of the original simulacrum also negates the illusion of representational depth; it is as if the "phantasms of the surface have replaced the hallucination of depth" (Deleuze 2004b: 30). The photographs that reveal the phantasmatic semblance constitute a further liberation from *resemblance* (of Denton as model). Indeed, the permutations can be seen as part of the dynamic genesis of simulation where "simulacra ascend and become *phantasms*" (Deleuze 2004b: 354). The differential relation to similitude within the series (with some photographs appearing to maintain the illusion, and others clearly revealing the semblance) produces a divergence that comprises the rejection of the Idea of the illusion. *Public Order* comprises an internal disparity within its serial form that echoes Deleuze's account of modern art: "Difference must be shown *differing*. We know that modern art tends to realise these conditions ... The work of art leaves the domain of representation" (2004a: 68). For Deleuze, "the domain of representation filled by copies-icons" was founded by Plato (2004b: 296). Deleuze's reversal of Platonism encompasses the affirmation of simulacra (via repetition with internal difference). The simulacrum's agility is contrasted with the stasis of representation, which: "mediates everything, but mobilises and moves nothing" and fails to capture difference (2004a: 67). Deleuze aligns the simulacrum with modernity, and particularly with pop art in its serial manifestation of a repetition with difference:

<DISP-QUOTE>pop art pushed the copy, the copy of the copy, etc., to that extreme point at which it reverses and becomes a simulacrum (such as Warhol's remarkable 'serial' series, in which all the repetitions of habit, memory and death are conjugated).

<ATTRIB>(2004a: 366)</ATTRIB></DISP-QUOTE>

There is a conceptual relation between Pickering's *Behind Flicks Nightclub* (2004) and Jeff Wall's *Destroyed Room* (1978, which is itself a direct reference to Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus*, 1827). *Destroyed Room* appears to show us the aftermath of a crime or violent incident. Yet it also reveals its staging by depicting the wooden struts supporting the fake constructed walls of the set. Like *Destroyed Room*, much of Pickering's *Public Order* does not bracket off the edges of its constructed set; the staging of the *image* is visible within the photograph. One could situate *Destroyed Room* and *Public Order* within a specific subset of contemporary photography that not only presents simulated environments for the camera, but reveals the artifice behind its fabricated subject. However, there are distinct differences in the photographer's role with regard to the creation of these constructions. Whereas Wall's *Destroyed Room* is staged *for* the camera, Pickering's *Denton* has a real purpose that precedes its being photographed.

The inclusion of *Public Order* in the exhibition *Staging Disorder*¹² revealed its similarities to, and differences from, constructed and staged imagery. In this context, *Public Order* had most resonance with Claudio Hils's series *Red Land, Blue Land* and Broomberg and Chanarin's *Chicago*—which also comprise photographs of military training sites. David Campany's inclusion of *Public Order* in a number of “documentary projects” where “artifice is their subject matter” prompts reflection on their individual differences.¹³ Campany highlights their aesthetic similarities—their “common visual style” that resonates with “the register of hyper-real simulation” with regard to virtual reality and the video game (2006: 10–11). However, the conceptual and political critique behind this work is elided when the emphasis is placed on the aesthetic. Moreover, Campany's assertion that the work is indistinguishable from “functional documents” produced by “military training facilities” overlooks the work's artistic and conceptual qualities (2006: 11). There is an *intentional* difference between these sites—or their functional documentation—and artistic reproductions. Although externally resembling the spaces that they reproduce, such work has an internal conceptual difference from the Idea of the original (and from its “functional documents”).

Pickering's work is not concerned with artifice so much as unmasking what lies behind it. In an interview with Anthony Luvera, she states that her “ambition is for the work to hopefully go beyond questions of ‘is it real or is it not?’ I see it as being much more about the complicated social systems that are represented in the constructed scenarios” (Pickering and Luvera 2009: n.p.). Pickering's concern is with the politics of representation behind these

sites, and with these spaces *as* representation (of the public, and perhaps most particularly of lower socio-economic groups).¹⁴ *Public Order* produces an appearance that resembles the original (Denton), yet possesses an intentional difference. Moreover, its particular simulacral operation—much like that of Deleuze’s simulacrum—enacts a positive difference that serves to question the hierarchy entailed in representation. Pickering’s intention is not to revel in artifice but to reveal the insidious reality of the constructions and the socio-economic, political and moral judgements behind their design.

Public Order deconstructs socio-economic stereotypes in a similar way to Sherman’s deconstruction of Hollywood’s “stock personae” (Krauss 1984: 59). There are differences between Pickering and Sherman in their distinctive approaches to staging: whereas Sherman creates and performs the role of the stereotype—embodying the simulacrum—Pickering selects and documents a pre-existing simulacrum in a way that undermines its staging. Krauss highlights that, because Sherman is “both subject and object,” then “the play of stereotype in her work is a revelation of the artist herself as stereotypical” (1984: 59). Pickering’s deconstruction of the stereotype consists of a reproduction by different means—*Public Order* repeats the “original” simulacrum in order to reveal the stereotype. Yet both artists “reproduce what is already a reproduction” (1984: 59). Moreover, they both engage with the simulacrum in order to produce a deconstructive mechanism via a process of repeating *with* difference. Pickering produces a deconstruction of representation by highlighting the inherent stereotype and revealing the representation *as* representation (by going behind the representation to photograph its superficial reality). The correlation is further highlighted by Krauss’s reading of Sherman: “the subject of her images is this flattened, cardboard imitation ... her execution is no less preordained and controlled by the culturally already-given” (1984: 59). Like Sherman’s, Pickering’s use of photography constitutes a form of critique.

Pickering’s work often engages reflexively with representation by depicting something that is already an image. In this regard, there is a confluence between her work and the genre of rephotography. The “Pictures” group—including Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince—were the most cited exponents of rephotography (a genre that was often aligned with the Baudrillardian simulacrum).¹⁵ In his essay “Anti-Platonism and Art,” Paul Patton reads the work of Levine (and others) as exemplars of postmodernist art, “concerned with the reproduction of appearances” (1994: 142). Patton asserts that these appearances are not simply “second-order” reproductions (of pre-existing images), but they entail a transformation through the artist’s *conceptual* production (1994: 142). Whereas (modern) realist art aimed to eliminate the difference between the original and the copy, postmodernism inverts this goal

by establishing difference through similarity ([Patton 1994](#): 142–3). Pickering’s work consists of a Deleuzian simulacral repetition (a semblance rather than a likeness) that possesses internal difference from the original. This is particularly evident in her *Art and Antiquities* series, which includes complex photographic “documentations” of the fakes produced by the notorious art forger Shaun Greenhalgh. Also comprising recreated scenes with genuine forgeries (as well as fake artefacts constructed for a television programme about Greenhalgh), this series manifests the irony behind Plato’s *Sophist*—of searching for the true pretender. Greenhalgh’s fake artworks also achieve ‘authenticity’ when they are photographed by an artist using a historic photographic technique such as the salt print. Pickering observes that, whereas appropriation art of the 1980s such as that by Levine drew on the work of (real) photographers such as Evans, her *Art and Antiquities* replicate something that is fake ([2015](#)).

In *Art and Antiquities* and in *Public Order*, photography is no longer aligned with representation but with repetition. Pickering’s work demonstrates difference *from*, rather than identity *with*, that which it purports to copy. Writing on Prince, Michael Newman insists that rephotography does not produce a perfect copy: it is a resemblance that *bears difference* ([2006](#): 54–5). For Newman, repetition is the means through which the simulacrum is manifested; he insists that this is a repetition *with* difference:

<DISP-QUOTE>It is not possible to ‘penetrate’ the simulacrum, as if to pierce through a veil, because there is nothing behind or beyond. The only way of getting some purchase on it as simulacrum, the only way to make the ‘as’ manifest, is to repeat it. Thus repetition can be understood as a way of creating a horizontal difference across the depthless surface of simulation.

<ATTRIB>([2006](#): 54–5)</ATTRIB></DISP-QUOTE>

In *Public Order*, Pickering repeats Denton *as* simulacrum and pictures the veil itself in all its depthless surface. *Public Order* consists of photographs that repeat a model without origin, but they do not faithfully copy the *Idea* of Denton: the aesthetic resemblance belies the intentional artistic differences. Denton is already a simulacrum, but *Public Order* produces a simulacral copy—a simulacrum of a simulacrum—that challenges the original (mis)representation.

Representation and repetition are intrinsic to photography. Photography as a medium consists in copying; it repeats and often duplicates its referent as model. Photography’s mediation—as re-production and re-presentation—can be seen to embody the Platonic “good copy” that repeats the identity of its model. Deleuze describes photography as an *analogical* medium that “proceeds by resemblance” ([Deleuze 2003 \[1981\]](#): 80). For Krauss, though,

photography's resemblance is such that it "raises the specter of nondifferentiation" and thus undermines the distinction that Plato seeks to make between the original and the copy (1984: 59). Krauss, then, reads a certain Deleuzianism into photography. In Krauss's analysis, photography's mimetic capacity enables its deconstructive mechanism. *Public Order* functions in such a manner—deconstructing the stereotypes behind the fake town, but also deconstructing the medium itself. The self-referential elements such as the photograph within the photograph (in *Victoria Road*) or the picturing of the props area in *Guards/Violent Man* or the back-stage area in *Behind Flicks Nightclub* are additional reflexive tools for this deconstruction. Reflexivity rejects conventional mimesis and disrupts our reading of photographs as transparent windows on the world. What is brought to the fore in *Public Order* is the conceptual difference between photography and its model.

Public Order functions like the Deleuzian simulacrum in its production of difference through repetition. *Public Order* may produce external resemblance, but there is an essential difference from the "original." Denton is a *model* town (though it has no original); *Public Order* produces an appearance of something that is already an image, but it is a repetition *with* difference. *Public Order*'s divergence from the "internal essence" of Denton—the refusal to be a "good" copy of the deceitful original—echoes Deleuze's simulacrum and its undoing of the Platonic hierarchy of representation. In refusing conventional photographic *representation*, these works provoke reflection on photography's potential as a simulacral repetition—one that possesses a *positive difference* from that which it appears to copy. Deleuze's simulacrum feigns resemblance through (external) "appearance-making" that disguises its internal dissimilitude (to the Platonic Idea). Pickering's work engages the Deleuzian simulacrum via its phantasmatic *appearance-making* in conjunction with intentional (internal) dissimilitude.

In its move from representation to repetition, *Public Order* embodies Deleuze's opposition to Platonic *iconology*. The affirmation of the simulacrum occurs through similitude and dissimilitude. In *Public Order*, we see photography as a "false copy" encompassing internal non-resemblance. That the simulacrum uses resemblance in order to produce *difference* undermines representation as such. *Public Order*, then, also produces a deconstruction of the documentary mechanism of photography as a medium of re-production. Rather than *proceeding by resemblance*, *Public Order* proceeds (by divergence) through semblance and dissemblance. The complex interplay of semblance and dissemblance in *Public Order* challenges photography's historic alignment with truth, although, in its divergence from the original, *Public Order* is a simulacral repetition that paradoxically

engenders truth. Simulation reveals photography's truth.</BODY>

<BACK>

<ACK><TITLE>Acknowledgements</TITLE>

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¹ See *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, eds. P. Patton and J. Protevi (2003), for an interesting comparative study of those thinkers.

² Roland Barthes characterises the photograph as not merely “a ‘copy’ of reality” but “an emanation of *past reality*” ([Barthes 2000 \[1980\]](#): 88–9). We cannot deny that “*the thing has been there*”—*that-has-been* ([Barthes 2000 \[1980\]](#): 76).

³ Camille references Benjamin’s ([1999 \[1936\]](#)) “Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” which highlights the decline of aura in the era of technological reproducibility (Benjamin’s “Small History of Photography” essay is also pertinent).

⁴ See Lomas on this point of how Klossowski helped to translate Benjamin’s “Work of Art” essay ([2011](#): 44).

⁵ References to *Sophist* will follow customary Platonic methods of citation and be preceded by the abbreviation *S*.

⁶ Deleuze originally published this essay with a title that specifically referred to the reversal of Platonism in the journal *Revue de Metaphysics* in 1967—see the preface to *The Logic of Sense* where Deleuze notes that the appendices were revised from previous publications ([2004b](#): x).

⁷ Baudrillard insists that, in the era of the hyperreal, we encounter a generation of signs that are no longer referential—“models of a real without origin or reality” ([Baudrillard 1994 \[1981\]](#): 1–2).

⁸ This is something that analytical philosophy fails to grasp: in its alignment of photography with *automatism*, the agency and creativity of the photographer are denied.

⁹ See Pickering’s book *Explosions, Fires and Public Order* (2010a). Images are also available on the artist’s website: <URI>www.sarahpickering.co.uk/</URI>

¹⁰ Pickering has stated that training officers acting as rioters—and armed with baseball bats—would hit the trainees’ shields and that one recruit retaliated by kicking (email from Pickering, 3 March [2016](#)).

¹¹ Pickering has spoken about the latent threat of violence in these images in an interview with Susan Bright (Pickering 2010b). She initially photographed the violent training exercises but did not want to produce reportage ([Pickering 2015](#)). Her subsequent decision to photograph deserted spaces surprised the participants, who assumed that the riot exercises would have made for more interesting action shots.

¹² Curated by Christopher Stewart and Esther Teichmann—at London College of Communication in 2015. The exhibition catalogue *Staging Disorder* ([2015](#)), edited by Stewart and Teichmann, includes artworks and commissioned essays.

¹³ In [Campany’s \(2006\)](#) essay “Straight Pictures of a Crooked World,” he includes Pickering’s *Public Order* series in a discussion of “documentary” work alongside: Broomberg and Chanarin’s *Chicago*, An-My Lê’s *Small Wars*, Larry Sultan’s *The Valley*, and Steffi Klenz’s *Nonsuch*.

¹⁴ Pickering states that, “All of the burning environments in *Fire Scene* are particular types of places, representative of a particular group of people—usually low income. There’s always a suggestion of neglect or deviation” ([2009](#)).

¹⁵ Douglas Crimp’s curation of the *Pictures* exhibition (1977) and his subsequent essay heralded a generation of artists concerned with the nature of the photographic image. Levine’s *After Walker Evans* (exhibited at New York’s Metro Pictures Gallery in 1981) is a paradigmatic example of rephotography.